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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7564  
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 000320

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NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/MARCHESE/HARDING

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/01/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MARR](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [SI](#)  
SUBJECT: LEBANON: UN MISSION TO LEBANON AND ISRAEL ON  
UNSCR 1701 IMPLEMENTATION

Classified By: DCM Christopher W. Murray. Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY  
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¶1. (C) UN Senior Advisor Michael Williams visited Beirut February 27-March 1 to prepare a report to the SYG on implementation of UNSCR 1701. Williams remarks on his preceding visit to Israel were mostly negative. He was concerned at Israel's refusal to accept the visit of a UN cartographer to study the Sheba'a Farms issue, and more broadly, he did not see how the hardening Israeli attitudes that he witnessed would contribute to regional stability. DCM urged that the Lebanese be pressed to assert firmer control over the border with Syria; Williams took the point and added that it would help if the Israelis could provide more specific evidence of alleged cross-border arms smuggling to Hizballah. In Beirut, Williams met with the Prime Minister, other senior GOL figures, and Hizballah former minister Mohamed Fneish. He said he pressed Fneish to ensure that there are no further Hizballah provocations, which would serve neither Hizballah's nor Lebanon's interests. Williams was unclear about the various plans to resolve Lebanon's internal political impasse. End Summary.

READ-OUT FROM TEL AVIV  
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¶2. (C) On February 28 French Ambassador Bernard Emie hosted a luncheon for visiting UN SYG Senior Advisor Michael Williams, which was also attended by UN SYG Representative for Lebanon Geir Pedersen and DCM. Williams had come to Lebanon to prepare his report on UNSCR 1701 implementation, due in New York on March 16.

¶3. (C) Williams and his team had just returned from Israel. They were concerned about increasingly aggressive Israeli rhetoric with respect to Lebanon, Israel's refusal to allow a UN Secretariat cartographer to visit Israel in connection with a study of the Sheba'a Farms, and a conspicuous lack of Israeli concern about domestic developments in Lebanon. Williams said he detected no Israeli interest in moving from a cessation of hostilities, as it exists under UNSCR 1701, to a cease-fire.

¶4. (C) Williams said Israel has a real interest in the survival and effectiveness of the Siniora government. But instead, Israeli officials are not just indifferent to domestic developments in Lebanon, they are uninterested. Williams described Israeli attitudes on Sheba'a Farms as

especially dug-in, with Israeli FM Livni refusing to engage on the subject, much less discuss the possibility of compromise, such as putting Sheba'a under UN custody. At one point, both Williams and French Ambassador Emie lamented together that Israel's behavior in the wake of UNSCR 1701 has done little to promote stability in Lebanon, support the Siniora government, or promote stability between Lebanon and Israel.

#### LEBANON PROGRAM

14. (C) Williams had a full schedule in Beirut that included meetings with the Prime Minister, Ministers of Defense and of the Interior, the head of the Internal Security Forces, the commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), and the recently-resigned Hizballah minister Mohamed Fneish. Williams said he was firm in telling Fneish that Hizballah should do nothing provocative with respect to Israel as well as within Lebanon itself; such action would not be in Lebanon's interest. Fneish was apparently amiable and accepting throughout the meeting. (Note: One of Williams' UN staff members called us on March 1 to regret the "embarrassing" press photos that implied overly warm relations between the Williams delegation and Fneish. End Note.)

15. (C) As for the ongoing political impasse in Lebanon, Williams and Emie agreed that the Taif Process that began in 1989 is now dead in the water. Nobody knows what should replace it. During a review of the various proposals to resolve the current crisis, it emerged that no one, not even Prime Minister Siniora, has a clear picture of what is on the table. The issues include formation of a new Lebanese cabinet, approval of the Special Tribunal to try suspects in

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the Hariri assassination, a new election law, parliamentary elections, and election of a new president.

#### ARMS SMUGGLING

16. (S) DCM commented that arms smuggling and Lebanese control over its border with Syria are a high U.S. concern. Williams responded that more intelligence is needed to substantiate accusations of systemic arms smuggling to Hizballah. He reported that the Israelis had provided to him only one convincing case, which took place in January, of arms smuggling from Syria to Hizballah. It was based, he said, "on more than just humint. (Comment: In a March 1 meeting with the Ambassador and DCM, Defense Minister Murr reported to us that Williams told him the Israelis had shown him a photo of a truck, located in the Biqa' Valley, that was allegedly bringing arms to Hizballah from Syria. Murr said he asked Williams how one could know that this photo did not date from the summer war, and that in fact the truck was carrying weapons transported from Syria. End Comment.)

17. (C) UN SYG Representative for Lebanon Geir Pedersen suggested that the Israelis might do with the Lebanese what they have done with the Palestinians: provide some timely and actionable intelligence to the Lebanese on pending or recent arms smuggling, and then test the Lebanese by seeing if they will act on it. Apart from this possibility, both Williams and Emie worried about the prospect that Israel may strike targets in Lebanon, such as trucks in the Biqa' Valley, to make a point about the need for better control over arms smuggling to Hizballah. On the issue of Israel providing substantiated evidence of weapons smuggling, Williams reported that Israeli BG Baidetz had confirmed to him in Israel that he would visit New York next week to confer with the UN and UNSC delegations about arms smuggling across the Syrian-Lebanese border.

18. (C) Williams also confirmed that a UN DPKO mission is

presently assessing border controls along Lebanon's frontiers. He expected that the team would report that border controls are much more secure where UNIFIL is present, but that problems remain elsewhere, in the north and along Lebanon's eastern border with Syria. The DPKO team, he said, is being led by the same individual who had headed the border assessment study done in advance of the December 2006 UNSCR 1701 implementation report.

19. (C) French Embassy officers present at the luncheon noted German efforts to help the Lebanese on border controls. They had sensed some internal German problems in moving forward on a pilot project for northern Lebanon. Emie was interested in getting the EU involved, but his French colleagues said that the EU was unenthusiastic about border help, probably for legal, bureaucratic, and budget reasons.

UNIFIL  
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10. (C) Williams reported that Hizballah's Mohamed Fneish was positive about Hizballah's relations in the south with UNIFIL. Willimas suspected that Fneish may have been ordered to convey such an attitude, including public remarks that UNIFIL is a friendly force. Williams was told that Hizballah figures were favorably inclined toward the French UNIFIL contingent, but less so toward the Spanish, and somewhere in between on the Italians. Part of the poor relations with the Spanish derived from a December 5 incident when Spanish soldiers confronted several possible Hizballah operatives who were walking along a road. When the Spaniards asked the individuals to show them the contents of a bag they were carrying, the Spanish soldiers found weapons, which they confiscated. Several booby trapped explosives were found in the area the following day, as an apparent warning to the Spanish UNIFIL contingent.  
FELTMAN